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Remembering author, journalist and Wollongong resident Mary Rose Liverani

By Glen Humphries
Updated January 6 2023 - 4:52pm, first published January 5 2023 - 4:30pm

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Author and journalist Mary Rose Liverani spent many years in Wollongong, before moving back to her birthplace in Glasgow. Picture: supplied

One story that author and freelance journalist Mary Rose Liverani wrote that sticks in the mind of her daughter Petra.

"She wrote a story about young guys going to the Master Builders Club and picking up older women," Petra said.

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"This was written a long time ago before they talked about cougars or anything like that. The title of the article I remember was 'grab a granny'."

Mrs Liverani passed away on Tuesday in a Banksia nursing home aged 83, after a short period of dementia.

Mary Rose Liverani — The Winter Sparrows: a reading. Credit: Allen & Unwin

She and her family migrated from Glasgow to Wollongong in 1952 at the age of 13 and went on to write a book about that experience, called *The Winter Sparrows*.

That award-winning book found its way into schools and universities, where students would study it.

She also worked at Unanderra and Wollongong libraries, was a freelance journalist for several newspapers and worked as a film censor and a reporter with the Law Society Journal.

Married to Ermete, an Italian migrant, they had two daughters - Petra and Alessandra. After the death of Ermete, she moved back to Glasgow and later to Italy before the onset of dementia necessitated her return to Australia.

Petra said she and her sister got a lot of moral instruction from their mother.

"She was not afraid to speak her mind so she taught me and my sister to stand up and speak our mind and not go along with the crowd," Petra said.

"It was a crime to do things just because other people were doing it. You didn't have to believe authority just because they were telling you something."

She remembered when her mother applied for a job as a TV reporter with the ABC, though she felt too nervous to go to the interview.

"I quite honestly can't see how they would have chosen her because she had a very strong Glaswegian accent," Petra said.

"I don't think she would have made it. I think they would have said 'we can't understand her'.

" Even though she came here when she was 13 she was very Scottish and she never wanted to lose her accent."

A memorial service will be held in Arncliffe on January 11 at 6.30pm.

People interested in attending in person or by Zoom are asked to contact 0401 023 961.

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Glen Humphries
Senior journalist

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